

Autumn Internationals: Joe Marler Takes On Key Welfare Role

Joe Marler may have stepped away from wearing his England jersey, but calling it retirement would be premature; he has already undertaken a vital fresh assignment supporting the national team. After enjoying several months away from competitive rugby, the veteran prop has returned to assume his responsibilities as Player Welfare Manager ahead of the Autumn Internationals.

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Making sure England's athletes receive attention both on and away from the pitch. During an appearance on the For The Love of Rugby podcast, the 34-year-old candidly discussed the challenges and surprising revelations he has faced in his relatively new position. Marler emphasized that he acts as a bridge between inexperienced players and their sometimes-intimidating Directors of Rugby.

From his perspective regarding welfare, he explained, It's fundamentally about ensuring that individuals are supported so they can perform, recover, and prolong their careers. Who else could better appreciate the demands of representing England, and the immense pressure it brings, than former internationals who lived through it?

Marler's influence comes at a crucial time for England rugby. With intense Autumn fixtures approaching, maintaining morale and mental health is just as important as technical preparation. His credibility as a former frontline player enables him to

build trust quickly, creating a safe environment for younger athletes to share concerns that may otherwise go unheard.

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Autumn Internationals 2025: Schmidt Stands Firm on Late Arrivals Policy

Rugby, notorious for its physical and psychological toll, is increasingly dependent on figures like Marler who understand the culture from the inside. Meanwhile, attention in the Southern Hemisphere focuses on towering lock Will Skelton, whose schedule with French Top 14 club La Rochelle forced him to leave after the Wallabies' Two-Test tour of South Africa in July.



That absence ruled him out of Australia's subsequent two matches against Argentina, which ended with both nations sharing a victory apiece. Now 33, Skelton is also unavailable for this weekend's Eden Park Test. The clash carries high stakes, as a New Zealand victory will confirm the Bledisloe Cup remains secured across the Tasman for another year.

Theoretically, Skelton could have joined late for the Auckland Test, but head coach Joe Schmidt maintains a strict policy against delayed arrivals during Test preparation weeks. Instead, Schmidt coordinated directly with La Rochelle head coach Ronan O'Gara while evaluating whether Skelton could re-enter the Wallabies setup for the following Perth encounter.

Assistant coach Tom Donnelly addressed the situation publicly on Tuesday afternoon. His capability to inspire, encourage, and work collaboratively with teammates to ensure collective unity is really major for this group. Looking ahead to the Autumn Internationals 2025, Donnelly added that maintaining strong leadership figures like Skelton will be essential if Australia hopes to compete at the highest level.

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England Vs Australia: Wallabies Chase Historic Win at Eden Park

Secondly, his sheer size provides a remarkable advantage; he dominates collisions more naturally than most, which is invaluable when the goal is winning rugby contests. Australia enters Saturday's Eden Park meeting under the burden of a 39-year winless streak at the venue. Comparisons are already being drawn with the intensity of an England vs Australia clash, as both fixtures carry historic weight and showcase the fierce rivalry at the top level of international rugby.

Breaking that drought would not only reshape the narrative surrounding the Wallabies but also give them confidence heading into Perth, where Skelton's expected return could further boost the squad. Despite his absence, the Wallabies remain leaders in the Rugby Championship standings, albeit by a narrow single competition point.



With two rounds left, Australia has already demonstrated resilience and quality throughout 2025. Earlier this season, they claimed memorable victories against the British & Irish Lions, the Springboks of South Africa, and the Pumas of Argentina, reminding global audiences that they remain powerful contenders.

Securing consecutive wins against the All Blacks would send a monumental statement to the rugby world. Such results would not only underline Australia's resurgence but also highlight the importance of balancing player availability with club obligations in the increasingly complex modern rugby calendar.

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